

In The Claims:

1. *(currently amended)* An arrangement for inserting an alternative media file into a streaming multimedia file destined for at least one predetermined end-user, the arrangement comprising

a first cache for storing a received alternative media file;

a second cache for storing a streaming multimedia file;

a control unit for receiving as a first input a control signal from said first cache and generating as an output a switching control signal indicative of the presence or absence of a complete alternative media file being stored in said first cache; and

a switching mechanism, coupled to each one of said control unit, said first cache, said second cache and said streaming multimedia file for providing as an output, directed to the at least one end-user, a stream selected from one of said first cache, said streaming multimedia file and said second cache, as controlled by said switching output signal from said control unit so as to insert the alternative media file in the stream,

wherein the alternative media file is inserted in the stream independent of boundaries of the multimedia file at a predetermined location in the stream, including either one of the beginning and the end of the streaming multimedia file.

2. *(currently amended)* An arrangement for inserting an alternative media file into a streaming multimedia file destined for at least one predetermined end-user, the arrangement comprising

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a first cache for storing a received alternative media file;
a second cache for storing a streaming multimedia file;
a control unit for receiving as a first input a control signal from said first cache
and generating as an output a switching control signal indicative of the presence or
absence of a complete alternative media file being stored in said first cache; and
a switching mechanism, coupled to each one of said control unit, said first cache,
said second cache and said streaming multimedia file for providing as an output, directed
to the at least one end-user, a stream selected from one of said first cache, said streaming
multimedia file and said second cache, as controlled by said switching output signal from
said control unit so as to insert the alternative media file at a predetermined location in
the stream, including either one of the beginning and the end of the streaming multimedia
file.

~~The arrangement as defined in claim 1~~ wherein the control signal output from the first cache indicates that a complete alternative file is stored and is ready for transmission to the predetermined at least one end-user, or will be ready in time to transmit.

3. *(original)* The arrangement as defined in claim 1 wherein the control signal output from the first cache indicates that an alternative file is available to be streamed to said first cache from an external server and is ready to begin transmission to the predetermined at least one end-user.

4. *(original)* The arrangement as defined in claim 1 wherein the switching mechanism supplies as an output the streaming multimedia file in the absence of a signal from the control unit that an alternative file is ready to transmit.

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5. *(original)* The arrangement as defined in claim 1 wherein the switching mechanism supplies as an output the cached alternative file stored in said first cache in response to a signal from the control unit that an alternative file is ready to transmit.

6. *(previously presented)* The arrangement as defined in claim 1 wherein the control signal input to said control unit indicates that the alternative media file transfer to the predetermined at least one end-user is completed, the control unit thereafter supplying a switching output signal to said switching mechanism requesting said switching mechanism to supply as the output the cached streaming multimedia file from the second cache.

7. *(original)* The arrangement as defined in claim 1 wherein the arrangement further comprises a billing system coupled to the control unit for receiving information from said control unit regarding the identity of each alternative media file transmitted, the identity of the at least one end-user, and related statistics regarding the transmission of various alternative media files to a plurality of different end-users.

8. *(previously presented)* The arrangement as defined in claim 7 wherein the related statistics include the number of times each alternative media file was requested during a predetermined period of time.

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9. *(previously presented)* The arrangement as defined in claim 7 wherein the related statistics includes the time of day and date that each alternative media file was requested.

10. *(original)* The arrangement as defined in claim 1 wherein the alternative file is defined as an advertisement file.

11. *(original)* The arrangement as defined in claim 1 wherein the alternative file is defined as an emergency information file.

12. *(original)* The arrangement as defined in claim 1 wherein the arrangement is disposed at a local point of presence in a communication network.

13. *(original)* The arrangement as defined in claim 12 wherein the arrangement is disposed at a headend location in an HFC communication network.

14. *(original)* The arrangement as defined in claim 12 wherein the arrangement is disposed between a wide area data network and a local distribution network.

15. *(original)* The arrangement as defined in claim 12 wherein the arrangement is disposed between a telecommunications central office and a DSL communication network.

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16. *(original)* The arrangement as defined in claim 12 wherein the arrangement is disposed between a telecommunications central office and wireless communication network.

17. *(original)* The arrangement as defined in claim 12 wherein the arrangement is disposed in a communications device at an end-user location.

18. *(original)* The arrangement as defined in claim 17 wherein the communications device comprises a set-top box.

19. *(original)* The arrangement as defined in claim 17 wherein the communications device comprises a residential gateway device.

20. *(original)* The arrangement as defined in claim 1 wherein the arrangement further comprises a rule server for retrieving information related to the predetermined at least one end-user and selecting the alternative media file based on said retrieved information and the specific content of the streaming multimedia file.

21. *(currently amended)* A method of inserting an alternative media file in a streaming multimedia file destined for a predetermined end-user, the method comprising the steps of:

a) storing a selected alternative multimedia file in a first cache at a local point of presence;

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- b) establishing a communication link between said streaming multimedia file and said predetermined end-user;
 - c) transmitting said streaming media file to said end-user;
 - d) switching transmission from said streaming multimedia file to said alternative media file stored in said first cache;
 - e) storing in a second cache said streaming multimedia file received during the transmission of said alternative media file; and
 - f) upon completion of said alternative media file, accessing said second cache and resuming transmission of the cached streaming multimedia file,
- wherein the alternative media file is inserted in the streaming multimedia independent of boundaries of the multimedia file.

22. *(original)* The method as defined in claim 21 wherein in performing step a), the following steps are performed:

- a1) receiving a request from a predetermined end-user for a streaming multimedia file;
- a2) accessing a rule server with the identity of said end-user, content provider and/or content identity;
- a3) using said identity to select an appropriate type of alternative file for said predetermined end-user and retrieving location information regarding said selected alternative file;
- a4) sending a request for file transfer from a server storing said selected alternative file to the first cache.

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23. *(original)* The method as defined in claim 21 wherein in performing step a), the following steps are performed:

- a1) detecting the start of a streaming multimedia flow;
- a2) accessing a rule server with the identity of said end-user, content provider and/or content identity;
- a3) using said identity to select an appropriate type of alternative file for said predetermined end-user and retrieving location information regarding said selected alternative file;
- a4) sending a request for file transfer from a server storing said selected alternative file to the first cache.

24. *(original)* The method as defined in claim 21 wherein in performing step d), switching from said streaming multimedia file to said alternative file when recognizing that an alternative file is available.

25. *(original)* The method as defined in claim 21 wherein in performing step d), switching from said streaming multimedia file to said alternative file at the beginning of said multimedia file.

26. *(original)* The method as defined in claim 21 wherein in performing step d), switching from said streaming multimedia file to said alternative file at the end of said multimedia file.

27. *(original)* The method as defined in claim 21 wherein in performing step d), switching from said streaming multimedia file to said alternative file at any location during transmission of said multimedia file.

28. *(original)* The method as defined in claim 21 wherein in performing step d), providing transition segments between the streaming multimedia file and the alternative file.

29. *(original)* The method as defined in claim 28 wherein the transition segments provide "fade in" and "fade out" between said files.

30. *(previously presented)* The method as defined in claim 21 wherein in performing step d), switching from said streaming multimedia file to said alternative file based on a timing signal embedded in said streaming multimedia file.